

STEP 5: Developing a Thesis Statement

What is a thesis statement?

- tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the topic
- is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper
- directly answers the essential questions you developed. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself.
- is usually a single sentence somewhere in your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will present information or persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

Why is a thesis statement essential to the research process?

- A strong thesis statement expresses a unifying theme of a paper.
- It clearly defines what the paper is about!
- The more precise the thesis statement is, the more likely the writing that supports it will be clear and organized.

How do I begin to develop my thesis statement?

- Take your essential questions and decide what answer/attitude/angle/argument you want to present.
- Revise your essential questions into a thesis statement.

How do I know if I've developed a solid and informative thesis? Try these tests:

- 1) Does the thesis inspire the reader to ask "How" or "Why"?
- 2) Does the thesis lead the reader toward the subtopics of the paper? (Each topic sentence of the body paragraphs should include one subtopic presented in your thesis).
- 3) Can the thesis be adequately developed in the required length of the paper or project? (Each subtopic must be developed into a supporting paragraph with 7-10 sentences).
- 4) Would a reasonable reader NOT respond with "Duh!", "No kidding!", or "So what?"
- 5) Does the thesis **avoid** the first person point of view? ("I believe", "I think", "In my opinion", "I am going to tell you about....")

Example of what NOT TO DO:

Juvenile delinquency is a significant social issue that needs to be addressed. ← That sort of thesis statement does not clearly present the subtopics that you will be discussing in your paper.

Example of what TO DO: If your topic is "Juvenile Delinquency", your thesis statement could look like this:

Juvenile delinquency is an increasing social issue due to many contributing factors, yet education can play a significant role in reducing juvenile delinquents' return to crime, and rehabilitative methods have positively affected juvenile delinquents' return to society.